

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Year After King's Death, SCLC Battles to Survive

By DON McKEE
Associated Press Writer

ATLANTA, Ga. — A year after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. the organization he led during the civil rights movement's most successful era is struggling to survive on its own as an effective force for social change.

It is not a new struggle for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

BUT IT IS made more difficult by several factors, among them:

• The parallel yet conflicting development of increasing acceptance of racial change and the rise of black separatist elements.

• Opposition to the Vietnam war continues to draw the energy of many of the same elements that might otherwise be fighting full-time for Negro rights.

• The widening challenge particularly among young Negroes, to King's philosophy of non-violence.

Funds and followers are harder to come by now for SCLC, founded by King 12 years ago. But his disciples have no doubt that the organization will endure.

"WE'RE SOLVENT," said the Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, 43-year-old Alabama-born preacher who took over SCLC after King was killed by a sniper in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968.

Abernathy's challenge is not simple. Though SCLC is not strictly an organization, it must deal effectively with the broad problems of poverty, racism and war—the causes selected by SCLC as its reason for being.

SCLC, a loosely run organization of numerous church affiliates without formal rank-and-file membership, has been reorganizing, tightening its belt financially, planning—and waiting for something to give new life to the struggle.

"UNLESS WE get pulled into something, we'll kinda wait for a spark," said the Rev. Andrew Young, executive vice president and second in command.

Young and other top staff members including Abernathy have been making speeches at colleges and universities, primarily talking to black students, in an effort to generate a new youth movement in the fight against poverty, racism and war.

Political organizing in the South, with emphasis on Alabama, will be a major part of the 1969 program. SCLC has its sights on some 80

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

PAGE 19

MEMPHIS PRESS-
SCIMITAR

MEMPHIS, TENN.

Date: 4-4-69
Edition:
Author:
Editor: CHAS. H.
Title: SCUMBLETON

Character:
or

MEMPHIS

Classification:
Submitting Office:

Being Investigated

*Orig. one to Bureau
4-9-69*

44-1987-Sub-C-574
SEARCHED.....INDEXED.....
SERIALIZED *llg*.....FILED *llg*.....
APR 7 1969
FBI - MEMPHIS
gjt

Southern counties with heavy Negro population. In addition, there are plans to enlist garbage collectors, janitors and other low-paid workers in local campaigns. A national student conference is planned in Atlanta this summer.

BUT ABERNATHY said, "The forces of evil are becoming so sophisticated that it will be very difficult to really have a confrontation."

This problem, however, is not the basis of the most persistent question raised about SCLC from the outside: Will it survive as an effective force without King?

"Unquestionably there were two institutions: Dr. King and the SCLC," said Hosea L. Williams, director of voter registration and political education. He said when King was killed "everybody on the staff went through a period of hopelessness."

BUT NOW, he said, staff members are beginning to recover and to rally behind Abernathy.

Abernathy describes last year at the SCLC helm as a "creative one." He still tends to be defensive but is less preoccupied with the inevitable comparisons between him and King.

Abernathy, King's warm-up man for 13 years and jail

mate 17 times, said, "My first responsibility was to hold this staff together." None of the key staff has quit. Nor is any likely to, if for no other reason than loyalty to the cause.

ABERNATHY'S second major task was to continue King's plans for the Poor People's Campaign, an attempt to dramatize the plight of the poor and to spur Congressional action for jobs or a guaranteed income.

Even though King was "hesitating at that particular time," and might have postponed the campaign at least a year, Abernathy said he had no alternative but to proceed.

Abernathy said the campaign produced gains and brought poverty to the nation's attention even though major goals were not realized.

THE STAFF is being cut from nearly 200 to about 100 but cuts involve part-time or lower echelon employees, Abernathy said.

Money was a problem even for King and fund-raising is more difficult now.

In addition to mail appeals, SCLC draws funds from foundations for programs like voter education, sometimes from labor unions, churches and staff speaking engagements.